

The Circumstantial Case for the Christian Worldview



The Circumstantial Case Against Phil Spector

On September 26th, 2007, the murder trial of Phil Spector ended in a mistrial. Two jurors were unable to find Spector guilty of murder. In spite of the many pieces of circumstantial evidence that made up the cumulative case, these two jurors focused on single isolated issues (more on this [HERE](#)) and these single issues proved to be the downfall of the prosecution's case.



Phil Spector During Trial

Just a few days later, a cumulative, circumstantial murder case of my own came to a very different conclusion. Our jury returned a guilty verdict in a 23 year old case in the city of Torrance (you can download a Word Document of the news coverage [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)). Like Phil Spector, our case was cumulative in nature, originally built on a large number of circumstantial pieces of evidence, all of which pointed to the killer, a man named William Marshall. But unlike the Spector case, our jury had been carefully picked as a part of the judicial process. We interviewed the prospective jurors carefully, and seated a panel that understood the value of circumstantial evidence and also understood the power of a CUMULATIVE case.



Cumulative, Circumstantial Cases

Our jury was instructed over the course of four days as we interviewed and screened the candidates. From the prosecution's perspective, we wanted jurors who understood how powerful circumstantial evidence can be when taken cumulatively. Circumstantial evidences, by definition, are unrelated facts that, when considered together as a whole, can be used to infer a conclusion about something that was previously unknown. In this sense, circumstantial evidence is different than direct physical evidence. Let me give you an example. If you are sitting in a restaurant and someone comes inside and tells you that it is raining outside, you now have an eyewitness and you have direct physical evidence that it is raining. On the

other hand, if you are sitting there and you see several people come in carrying umbrellas and dripping wet, you may reasonably infer that it is raining from this circumstantial evidence, even before any of them tells you that this is true. You see, all of us assess circumstantial evidence as a part of our normal experience.

As we selected our jury for the homicide trial, we simply wanted people who (1) understood the power of circumstantial evidence and (2) would not fixate on minutia. We wanted jurors who would not 'major on the minors' but were capable of seeing the 'big picture'. We were trying to avoid jurors like the two hold outs in the Spector case; jurors who would 'camp' on minor 'possibilities', while ignoring the major 'reasonable' inferences. We wanted jurors who could understand the difference between what is 'possible' and what is 'reasonable'



The Possible Versus the Reasonable

We had to take the time to teach jurors this difference between what is 'possible' and what is 'reasonable' based on the evidence that they have in front of them. This was critical to our case. The judicial system does NOT allow jurors to enter a jury room and discuss theories that may be possible if there is no evidence to support these claims. This is called "speculation", and it is NOT allowed. Jurors are specifically instructed about this.

For example, it's quite possible in our restaurant scenario that there is someone outside who is handing customers umbrellas just prior to hosing them down with water. Perhaps THAT is what is causing these customers to come into the restaurant looking as they do. But while this is possible, it is certainly not reasonable. If no evidence about a man with a hose has been admitted into the trial, this kind of wild speculation about 'possibilities' is simply NOT allowed. Only REASONABLE inferences from the testimony and evidence can be considered in this case. Anything else is speculation and it is outside what can be legally considered.



The Building Blocks of a Circumstantial Case

Circumstantial cases are cumulative in nature; they usually are built with a number of evidences. The power of these kinds of cases increases when more and more of these evidences point to a single suspect. Eventually a case like this can be overwhelming as it becomes harder and harder to explain how ALL these individual circumstantial pieces could all point to the same suspect.

In our case against William Marshall (linked in this article), we presented approximately 30 pieces of circumstantial evidence, all of which pointed to the defendant as the murderer. By the time we got to the closing argument, the prosecutor was correctly able to make the claim that William Marshall was either the murderer, or the singular most unlucky person on planet earth; the evidence either accurately pointed to him as the true killer, or was just coincidentally aligned against him. The jury had no problem finding him guilty, because they understood the odds against the latter possibility. The only reasonable conclusion was that Marshall murdered the victim in this case.



The Cumulative Case for the Christian Worldview

There are many similarities between homicide cases and the case for the Christian Worldview. As a Christian, I don't accept the claims of Christianity as an act of blind faith. I've instead placed my faith in something that is reasonable and can be evaluated evidentially. Much like a juror in a homicide trial, I have the ability to examine the circumstantial case 'piece by piece'. The case is comprehensive and cumulative. There are MANY items of evidence that must be considered and they cannot be considered in isolation from one another. The strength of the case for the Christian Worldview comes from the cumulative depth of the evidence.

As I examine all the circumstantial evidence, I am struck by not only the volume of evidence supporting the reasonable truth of the Christian Worldview, but also the interconnected nature of this evidence. There is so much evidence to examine, but let's just stop and look at the few evidences that we have examined so far on our website. As you know, PleaseConvinceMe.com is a growing resource, and as time passes, this list of evidences will only grow longer and more comprehensive. In the meantime, let's look at some of the good reasons we have to believe that the Christian Worldview is true (you can click the links to examine the issues in more detail):



The Case for the Existence of the Soul is Strong Circumstantial Evidence that the Spiritual Realm Exists

The Case From Public Vs. Private Properties

Physical Properties Can Be PUBLICLY Known
Mental Properties Are Only PRIVATELY Known
THEREFORE: Mental Properties Are NOT Physical Properties

The Case From First Person Reality

Like Everyone, I Only Use First Person Possessive Pronouns to Indicate Possession of Something Other Than "Me"
Like Everyone, I Commonly Use First Person Possessive Pronouns When Describing My Body
THEREFORE: My Body Is Something Other Than "Me"

The Case From Measurability

Physical Entities Can Be Measured Using Physical Measurement Instruments
But As Humans, We Possess Mental Entities (Thoughts, Wills, Desires and Sensations) That Are Not Measurable By These Methods
THEREFORE: Humans Are More Than Physical Beings

The Case From Self Existence

Mental Entities Are Not Self Existent
But Our Brains, As Physical Entities, ARE Self Existent
THEREFORE: Our Brains Are NOT The Same As Our Minds

The Case From Free Agency

No Physical System is a Free Agent
Therefore No Physical System Has Moral Responsibility
Human Beings DO Have Moral Responsibility
THEREFORE: Therefore Human Beings Are NOT Simply Physical Systems

2 The Case for the Nature of the Universe is Strong Circumstantial Evidence that God Exists

The Temporal Nature of the Cosmos

The Universe Had a Beginning
Anything That Has a Beginning Must Have Been Caused By Something Else
Therefore, the Universe Must Have a Cause
This Cause Must Be Eternal, Uncaused and Personal (with the ability to 'decide' to cause)
The Cause is Therefore a Being with Incredible Power (God)

The Appearance of Design

Human Artifacts (like watches) Are Products of Intelligent Design
Our Universe and World Resemble Human Artifacts
Therefore, the Universe Is the Product of Intelligent Design
But the Universe is Complex and Giant in Comparison to Human Artifacts
Therefore, There is a Powerful and Vastly Intelligent Designer Who Created the Universe

The Existence of Objective Moral Truth

There is an Objective (Absolute) Moral Law
Every Law Has a Law Giver
Therefore, There is an Objective (Absolute) Law Giver
The Objective (Absolute) Law Giver is God

The Anthropic Nature of Our World and Universe

Our World has been uniquely designed so that:

Life can exist

That same life can examine the Universe

This unique design cannot be the result of random chance or probabilities

There is, therefore, a God who has designed us for a special cause in the universe

3 The Case for the Nature of Good and Evil is Strong Circumstantial Evidence for a Good God Existing in Superiority to an Evil Being

Evil exists in our world and begs for an explanation. There are two possibilities:

A “Good” Power is presiding over a world that is temporarily under the influence of a finite, subordinate “Evil” Power (This is the Christian worldview), or...

“Good” and “Evil” Powers (or Forces) exist in the world and are equal in strength, independent from one another, and co-eternal.

If two independent, equally strong, equally eternal powers of “good” and “evil” exist in the universe, each power would assert that it is “good” and the other is “bad”. True “good” and “bad” would require the existence of yet a third thing in the Universe: an outside standard that decides between the two

If this outside standard exists, IT is actually supreme over the two powers and is the true God of the Universe. It must “stand on its own” without dependence on yet another, additional standard.

We know that “evil” is the result of the perverted pursuit of one of three things: the attempt to satisfy physical need, the attempt to satisfy personal gain, or the attempt to attain power and glory, but these three objects of pursuit are actually “good” things by their nature.

For this reason, “evil” requires the existence of “good” before it can actually exist. “Evil” cannot ‘stand on its own’.

Therefore, we know that the objective standard that is supreme in the universe (and can ‘stand on its own’) must, by necessity, be a “good” power, while the “evil” power must, by necessity, be a subordinate power.



The Case for Immaterial Life and Intelligence is Strong Circumstantial Evidence that Spiritual Beings Other Than God Exist

The Argument from Thomas Aquinas

A good God creates beings in his image
God is an immaterial conscience being, and has created humans as material conscience beings
Consciousness is not a function of the material body
Therefore, humans are both material and immaterial beings (we have immaterial, conscious souls)
THEREFORE: In the continuum of beings it is reasonable to assume that some sort of immaterial conscious being exists in between the categories of God and Man

The Argument from Johannes Quenstedt

There are purely corporeal beings (i.e. stones)
There are partly corporeal and partly spiritual beings (i.e. Humans)
THEREFORE: It is reasonable to assume that there are purely spiritual beings (i.e. Angels)

The Argument from Charles Hodge

There are more than one kind of irrational beings (i.e. insects and animals)
THEREFORE it is reasonable to assume that there should be more than one kind of rational being (i.e. Humans and angelic beings)



The Case for the Reliability of the Bible is Strong Circumstantial Evidence that the Bible is Accurate in What It Teaches

The Old and New Testament Have Been Faithfully Transmitted

Careful Masoretes Subscribed to an Incredibly High Standard of Old Testament Transmission
The Dead Sea Scrolls Confirm the Transmission Process of the Old Testament
Ancient Sources Confirm the Early Canon of the Old Testament

Prologue to Ecclesiasticus
Philo
Jamnia
The Early Church Fathers
Josephus

Ancient Sources Confirm the Early Canon of the New Testament

Clement of Rome (c. A.D. 95)
Ignatius of Antioch (c. A.D. 115)
Polycarp, a disciple of John, (c. A.D. 108)

The Early Canon Arose and Was Recognized in Geographically Independent Areas

Irenaeus (in Asia Minor)
Origen (in Alexandria, Egypt)
Hippolytus (in Rome)
Eusebius (in Cæsarea, Palestine)
Athanasius (in Alexandria, Egypt)

The New Testament Can be Nearly Completely Re-Constructed from the Writings of the Early Church Fathers
The New Testament Documents are Larger in Number and Closer in Proximity to the Events Than ANY Other Ancient Recording of History

The Old and New Testament Have Been Verified with Archeology

The Old Testament Has been Verified by Archeological Findings from Neighboring Cultures

The Ebla Tablet
Archaeological digs in the city of Bogazkoy, Turkey
Archeological Digs in Sargon's Palace in Khorsabad, Iraq
The Belshazar Tablet
The Nebo-Sarsekim Tablet

The Old Testament Has been Verified by extra-Biblical confirmation of Biblical events

The campaign into Israel by Pharaoh Shishak
The revolt of Moab against Israel
The fall of Samaria
The defeat of Ashdod by Sargon II
The campaign of the Assyrian king Sennacherib against Judah
The siege of Lachish by Sennacherib
The assassination of Sennacherib by his own sons
The fall of Nineveh as predicted by the prophets Nahum and Zephaniah
The fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon

The captivity of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, in Babylon
The fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians
The freeing of captives in Babylon by Cyrus the Great

The New Testament Gospels and Writings Have Been Verified By Archeology

The Census Has Been Confirmed by the Quirinius Inscription
The Existence of Lysanias has Been Confirmed by the Damascus Inscription
The court called "the Pavement" has been confirmed by the discovery of the Tower of Antonia
The Existence of Pontius Pilate has been confirmed by the Pontus Pilate Rock
The Practice of Crucifixion Has Been Confirmed by remains of Yohanan Ben Ha'galgol
The Existence of Iconium Has Been Confirmed by the William Ramsay monument
The Term "Politarch" Has Been Confirmed By Thessalonican Inscriptions
The Existence of Sergius Paulus Has Been Confirmed by the Sergius Paulus Inscription
The Existence of Gallio, the Proconsul of Achaia Has Been Confirmed by the Delphi Inscriptions

The New Testament Gospel of Luke Includes Several True Accounts of Roman Cultural Practice

It includes a correct description of two ways to gain Roman citizenship
It includes an accurate explanation of provincial penal procedure
It includes a true depiction of invoking one's roman citizenship, including the legal formula, de quibus cognoscere volebam
It includes a true description of being in Roman custody and the conditions of being imprisoned at one's own expense

The Old and New Testament Have Been Confirmed by Prophecy

The Old Testament Accurately Predicts Ancient Historical Events

Babylon Will Rule Over Judah for 70 Years
Babylon's Gates Will Open for Cyrus
Babylon's Kingdom Will Be Permanently Overthrown

Babylon Will Be Reduced to Swampland
The Jews Will Survive Babylonian Rule and Return Home
The Ninevites Will Be Drunk in Their Final Hours
Nineveh Will Be Destroyed By Fire
Tyre Will Be Attacked By Many Nations
Tyre's Stones, Timber and Soil Will Be Cast Into the Sea
The Jews Will Avenge the Edomites
Edom Will Be Toppled and Humbled

The Old Testament Accurately Predicts The Coming Messiah

Daniel 9:25
Nehemiah 2:5,6

The New Testament Contains Accurate Predictions From Jesus Himself

Jesus Told Peter That He Would Deny Him Three Times
Jesus Said That Jerusalem and the Temple Would Be Destroyed
Jesus Said the Church Would Survive and Grow
Jesus Said the Gospel Would Be Preached to the Entire World
Jesus Said His Words Would Never Be Forgotten

The New Testament Contains Accurate Predictions Fulfilled by Jesus Himself

The Messiah Would Come from the Tribe of Judah
The Messiah Will Appear After the Jews Return to Israel
The Messiah Would Be Born in Bethlehem
The Messiah Would Be Preceded By a Messenger
The Messiah Would Enter Jerusalem While Riding on a Donkey
The Messiah Would Suffer and Be Rejected
The Messiah Would Be Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver
The Messiah Would Be Silent Before His Accusers
The Messiah Would Be Wounded, Whipped and Crucified
The Messiah Would Suffer at the Crucifixion
The Messiah Would Be Crucified With Criminals
The Messiah Would Be Buried in a Rich Man's Tomb

The Old and New Testament Foreshadow Scientific Discoveries

The Shape of the Earth
The Seating of the Earth in the Cosmos

The Fact That the Universe is Expanding
The Fact That There is a Beginning to Time and Matter (a Cosmological Singularity)
The Fact That There Are Valleys in the Seas
The Fact That There Are Springs and Fountains in the Sea
The Fact That There Are Ocean Currents
The Existence of the Hydrologic Cycle
The Existence of Entropy
The True Nature of Pleiades, Orion and Arcturus

6 The Case for the Historicity of Jesus is Strong Circumstantial Evidence that Jesus Existed

The Account from Pagan Historians

The Historical Record of Thallus (52AD)
The Historical Record of Pliny the Younger (61-113AD)
The Historical Record of Suetonius (69-140AD)
The Historical Record of Tacitus (56-120AD)
The Historical Record of Mara Bar-Serapion (70AD)
The Historical Record of Phlegon (80-140AD)
The Historical Record of Lucian of Samosata: (115-200 A.D.)
The Historical Record of Celsus (175AD)

The Account from Jewish Historians

The Historical Record of Josephus (37-101AD)
The Historical Record of the Jewish Talmud (400-700AD)
The Historical Record of The Toledot Yeshu (1000AD)

The Account from the Trustworthy Biblical Record

7 The Case for the Nature of Jesus from the Biblical Record is Strong Circumstantial Evidence that He Was Divine

Jesus Claimed to Be God

He Prefaced His Statements As Though He Was God
He Identified Himself With God's Own Name ("I Am")
He Said that He and the Father Were From the Same World
He Talked As Though He Was Equal With God
He Said That He and God Were One

Jesus Demonstrated that He Had the Nature of God

He Demonstrated Omniscience
He Demonstrated Omnipresence

He Demonstrated Omnibenevolence
He Demonstrated Omnipotence

Jesus Was Worshiped As God by Those Who Knew Him

The wise men worshiped him from the moment He was born
The leper worshiped Him at his healing
The synagogue ruler worshiped Him
The disciples worshiped him in the boat
The Canaanite woman worshiped Him
The mother of James and John worshipped Him
The blind man worshiped Him at his healing
The women worshiped Him at the empty tomb
The disciples worshiped Him at the Ascension

The Resurrection is Evidence of Jesus' Deity

There is Good Reason to Believe That Jesus Died on the Cross

The Roman Soldiers Would Not Have Allowed Jesus to
Survive
The Soldiers Didn't Break Jesus' Legs
John Saw Water Come from Jesus' Side
The Living Jesus Does Not Show Up anywhere Else in
History
The Bible Offered an Eyewitness to Verify the Death

There is Good Reason to Believe That the Apostles Didn't Imagine
the Resurrection

There is no Such Thing as a Group Hallucination
The Corpse Was Never Produced
The Apostles Claimed to be Eyewitnesses

There is Good Reason to Believe that the Resurrection is Not
Merely a Legend

There's Not Enough Time for the Legend to Develop
The First Witnesses Were Women and This Would Have
Been Seen As Unreliable

There is Good Reason to Believe That the Apostles Were Not Lying
About the Resurrection

They Could Not Have Removed the Body
The Locals Would Have Known It
They Had No Motive, and Only Suffered for the Claim

8 The Case for Life Beyond Death is Strong Circumstantial Evidence that Heaven Exists

The Evidence Persuades Us That There is a Good God Who Has Created Our World

We Know That a Good God Would Not Create a World in Which Complete Justice, Satisfaction and Joy Are Unattainable

We Know That Complete Justice, Satisfaction and Joy Are NOT Attainable in This Temporal Earthly Life

Therefore, If There is a Good God, It Is Reasonable to Believe That He Has an Eternal, Heavenly Life Waiting for Us in Which Complete Justice, Satisfaction and Joy Will Be Found

9 The Case for God's Nature is Strong Circumstantial Evidence that Heaven is a Place of Perfection

If there is a God, He is powerful enough to create everything that we see in our world. He is powerful enough to create something from nothing, powerful enough to create life from non-life, matter from non-matter.

If God is can do all that, he has UNFATHOMABLE power

If God has unfathomable power, he has the power to eliminate this little thing we call IMPERFECTION

If God has the power to eliminate imperfection, then He can certainly eliminate it from the realm in which HE exists

Therefore, Heaven is a place of PERFECTION



The Case When Considered in Totality

It's important for us, as Christians, to understand the value and power of cumulative circumstantial cases. Just like the jury in the criminal trials, we have to be wise about how we look at the evidence, and remember to look at the 'big picture'. It's also important for us to remember that the case for the Christian Worldview can be built on reasonable inferences; it does not rely on blind possibilities. We can make reasonable deductions and inferences from the many arguments and evidences that are presented, just as a jury does when it deliberates on a case. Our case is further strengthened by the fact that there are so many different

lines of evidence, crossing over a variety of disciplines, and all leading to the same conclusion. The case for the Christian Worldview becomes strong as we consider the TOTALITY of the evidence before us. While each individual piece of evidence is compelling in its own right (and, in fact, many people have been convinced by the singular arguments) the case becomes overwhelming when considered in totality.

The two jurors in the Phil Spector case failed to step back from the individual issues and look at the case in totality. They chose to speculate about possibilities, rather than draw reasonable conclusions from the evidence. The majority of the other jurors were able to focus on what is reasonable instead of what is possible, and they were convinced by the cumulative circumstantial case against Spector. In our case against William Marshall, the jurors were also convinced by the totality of the evidence and the reasonable inferences. In the end, they knew that William Marshall was either the unluckiest person in the history of the planet (and just happened to match all the circumstantial evidence), or he was, in fact, the killer.

In a similar way, Christianity is either FALSE, but lucky enough to be consistent with the circumstantial evidence we have listed, or it is TRUE and cannot help but be authenticated by this evidence. The case for the Christian Worldview is overwhelming because it requires us to explain how ALL these individual circumstantial pieces could all point to the same conclusion. If we consider the case for the Christian Worldview just as a jury considers the evidence in any criminal case, we will come to the conclusion that Christianity is the best and most reasonable explanation for the evidence.